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RR RUEHDBU RUEHSL
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ZNY CCCCC ZZH
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FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 5819
INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MOSCOW 003138

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/29/2019

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SUBJECT: A PREVIEW OF RUSSIA'S NEW MILITARY DOCTRINE

Classified By: Political M/C Susan M. Elliott for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶11. (C) Summary: Experts and media reports suggest Russia's new military doctrine, intended to project defense policy to 2020, will be issued in the near future. News headlines will focus on the fact that the new doctrine lowers the threshold for the use of nuclear weapons if other countries infringe on Russia's security interests. The new doctrine calls for accelerating the professionalization of the military (without abolishing conscription) and preparing for small, local conflicts. One contact involved in drafting the doctrine said China, not the west, is Russia's main preoccupation and a stand-off in the Far East would be the only conceivable scenario under which Russia would threaten the use of nuclear weapons. End summary.

The New Doctrine

¶12. (C) Deputy Director of the U.S.A.-Canada Institute and retired General Pavel Zolotarev told us December 28 that the Russian Security Council consulted with his institute during the drafting of the new military doctrine. While he has not seen the final draft of the document, he confirmed press reports that the document sets forth the key principles of Russia's defense policy to 2020. The document is approximately 17 pages long and is divided into three parts: "Military Dangers and Military Threats to the Russian Federation," "Military Politics of the Russian Federation," and "Military-Economic and Military-Technical Provision of Defense." He said Medvedev will likely sign the new military doctrine soon, possibly before year's end.

Preemptive Strikes Are Possible

¶13. (C) Zolotarev confirmed media reports that the new military doctrine allows Russia to launch preemptive attacks, including nuclear strikes, if Russia is threatened. The list of military threats includes other countries' ignoring Russian security interests, attempts to alter the balance of power such as deploying missile defense systems, interfering in Russia's internal policies, territorial disputes, conflicts near Russia's borders, and deploying weapons in space. According to Zolotarev, preemptive strikes would happen only if threats to Russia's security appeared imminent, such as cases where a potential enemy mobilized its military.

¶14. (C) Zolotarev the new doctrine marks a shift from preparing for a large-scale war requiring mass mobilization

to a posture that sees small, local conflicts and separatism as Russia's main military challenges. The doctrine therefore calls for Russia to have a largely professional, modern military capable of countering such threats to Russia and other countries in the Collective Security Treaty Organization. Press reports indicate that, under the new military doctrine, Russia plans to provide modern equipment for 30 percent of its military by 2015, and 70 percent of its military by 2020. The new doctrine, however, does not end conscription.

The Implications of the New Doctrine

¶5. (C) Zolotarev argued that, while the chances of a large-scale war breaking out are remote, China would most likely be the target of any preemptive nuclear strike. Most serious military planners dismissed any threat from NATO long ago, he posited. China still has a mass mobilization army, he said, and the Russian Far East is thinly populated, has little infrastructure, and a small Russian military contingent. With the Russian army restructured to rapidly respond to small-scale wars, the GOR would have to rely on its nuclear deterrent to prevent a Chinese attack. He admitted, however, that by declaring the right to launch a nuclear first strike, Russia appeared to be taking a step back from the spirit, if not the letter of its Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty Article VI commitments regarding nuclear disarmament. Other analysts have told us the poor state of Russia's conventional forces leave the planners with

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no choice but to rely more heavily on nuclear weapons in their war-fighting doctrine.

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